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BRITISH  
VERSUS  
AMERICAN CIVILIZATION.

A LECTURE,

BY

NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN, ESQ.,

(of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law.)



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1873.

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**British**  
*Henry Morgan*  
**American Civilization.**

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A Lecture delivered in Shaftesbury Hall,  
Toronto, 19th April, 1873.

*(Rev. Dr. McCaul, President of University College, in the Chair.)*

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## DEDICATION.

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*To His Excellency the Right Honorable the Earl of Dufferin, K.P., K.C.B.,  
Governor-General of the Dominion of Canada.*

MY LORD,

In requesting the permission, so promptly and gracefully granted, to dedicate the following pages to your Excellency, I was not animated by a desire to connect with a trifle like this, a name directly and indirectly dear to the history and literature of England—a sentiment which would be very powerful with me did I feel I had done anything really worthy of your Excellency's attention. The following lecture or speech was conceived under great pressure of time and affairs, and had to be given originally to the public without the advantage of having been committed to writing. Nor should I think of publishing it, but for the fact that from all parts of the Dominion eager and repeated requests have come that I should do so. Though I have had an opportunity of revising the notes, and though in doing this I have seen many opportunities of improvement,

yet, for obvious reasons I have thought it best that it should on the whole fairly represent what was extemporaneously uttered. It is an attempt to vindicate, in a perfectly friendly spirit, a civilization that, I believe, has been more fruitful than any other with which I am acquainted, in producing men cultivated on all sides—men who have not only shown themselves able to do, and contrive, and fight, and govern, and trade, but also on fitting occasion to “forego their own advantage,” and who have a thousand times over taught the priceless lesson—

‘Better not be at all than not be noble.’

I thought that if I dedicated this imperfect vindication to the present Governor-General of Canada, the reader would find an antidote to any errors it might contain, and a helpful illustration of my meaning where expression may have failed me.

I remain,

Your Excellency's obed't Servant,

NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN.





## BRITISH

VERSUS

## AMERICAN CIVILIZATION.

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MR. CHAIRMAN,—You, Sir, have already described in felicitous language, the circumstances out of which this lecture arose. Something like a fortnight ago the attention of all of us was arrested by bills proclaiming that a lecture would be delivered in this hall on “The New Civilization,” and speculation grew rife as to what this “New Civilization” might be. I confess I was puzzled: my mind wandered amid golden ages drawn by mighty and eager spirits long passed away, and then, remembering the sacred character of the lecturer, hovered over apocalyptic visions of millennial times. Mr. Herbert Spencer, in the *Contemporary Review*, has been painting with unfaltering dogmatism an era when men will look back on our boasted nineteenth century with wondering

pity and amused contempt. The audacious and uncompromising creed of the followers of Comte is held in countenance on this Continent by social experiments equally daring. All these social and spiritual schemes look to the future for justification and scope. Here there was room for much and varied surmise, and I confess it was with something like astonishment I found, after calling up and questioning the ghosts of dead Eutopias and the phantoms of impossible societies thrown out by eager and enthusiastic minds at the present hour, that the "New Civilization" was American Republicanism seen in the glow of extravagant hopes.

Since the announcement of this lecture I have received all sorts of letters, and both the leading papers have had their columns filled with epistles, some of them breathing a kind of panic. Evidently it is thought, in not a few quarters, that it is something desperate to reply to statements publicly made by a minister of the gospel. One anonymous person says I have no right to criticise a clergyman. In reply to this I beg to say, first, that I do not come here to criticise a clergyman, but to reply to a lecturer; and secondly, that I do not subscribe to the notion that persons of sacred calling should be exempt from criticism, believing as I do that it is one of the great misfortunes of all churches at the present moment, that the leaders are practically free from one of the most fruitful sources of improvement. There is no danger that I shall utter a word disrespectful to Dr. Tiffany. I respect and admire him as a man, and I honour him

as a minister of the gospel. There was some little heat a week ago. Time has elapsed; we are all more calm, and can approach the subject without any desire to make the British lion roar too loud.

And now it would be well to ask on the threshold—What is civilization? Civilization embraces everything from the form of government down to the manner in which a lady would invite another to tea. The laws, the arts, manners which “are not idle,” warlikeness or the contrary; these with a thousand dependent tributaries make up the sum of what we call a civilization. But in any given age or community we shall find one or more guiding principles, which, standing markedly out from all other forces, arrest attention, and sway the mighty sweep of surging life, as the moon does the sea. Such principles give the name to a civilization, and in comparing the forms society has taken at different times or in different places, we may either compare those moulding principles which have inspired and presided over the structures as they rose and stood in the foreground of history, beautiful or monstrous, simply grand or effeminately elaborate, shewing in every feature from the great lines drawn against the heavens to the merest detail of turret or statuette, the virtue that lived in the genius which called them into being; or we may compare the structures themselves, with, of course, constant reference to the intangible but irresistible laws which have made them what they are. This last is from every point of view preferable.

And here it would be well to guard against an error into which Dr. Tiffany seems to me to have fallen. He appeared to think that a given civilization may be stereotyped. He also stated that a necessary imperfection belonged to all human institutions. Now what is imperfect cannot be perpetual, nor can it remain for any great length of time unchanged, except on Chinese conditions which are not desirable. In calm and storm this world is wrapped in belts of force which act in accordance with mysterious notes, swelling up within them like airs or bursts of music, and when those notes reach their full compass, the moment of destruction has come; the waves "mixt with awful light" break on the stately and far stretching edifices of society, and, as in the woman's dream of which the poet tells,

Statues, king or saint, or founder fall;  
Then from the gaps and chasms of ruin left,  
Came men and women in dark clusters round  
Some crying: 'Lift them up! they shall not fall!'  
And others 'Let them lie, for they have fallen.'  
And still they strove and wrangled: and she grieved  
In her strange dream, she knew not why, to find  
Their wildest wailings never out of tune  
With that sweet note; and ever as their shrieks  
Ran highest up the gamut, that great wave  
Returning, while none marked it, on the crowd  
Broke, mixed with awful light, and shewed their eyes  
Glaring, and passionate looks, and swept away  
The men of flesh and blood, and men of stone,  
To the waste deeps together.

There is no more vivid picture in all literature of the huge mutation of time and the incidents which attend each change. System after system, style after style, form

succeeding form, institutions rock-foundationed and buttressed for eternity, at the inevitable touch disappear, and those who have fought for and fought against them follow into the same oblivious gulf. The rule of the ages is, "the old order changeth, giving place to the new;" and therefore when making a comparison between any two civilizations or any two forms of the same civilization, we are speaking not of enduring types, but of phases, long continuing no doubt, but still phases, of human progress and development.

In the present state of the world we have various forms of civilization. But when we speak of modern civilization we speak of that which is common to all the nations of Europe, to Australasia, and to North America. Of this generic civilization there are several forms sufficiently distinct to lead to comparison. When adjudicating between them, we must take into consideration their respective virtues and defects—above all, their leading characteristics—and so we are met here to-night, not in the spirit of partisanship, or an uneasy patriotism wanting in dignified self-confidence, but in a spirit at once generous, judicial and patriotic, to strike the balance between two forms of modern life, with respect to their claims upon the admiration of the world. This statement must be thus far qualified that I am here to make a reply. We have already heard one side, and, consequently, I should be false to the purpose for which I stand on this platform if I were not to remember that I am an advocate. But this cannot influence me

to "set down aught in malice," and I make the observation only to explain why it is that I assume from the commencement the superiority of British over American civilization.

But there is another standpoint whence I view this subject. Placed as we are with our destinies in our hands, the world before us where to choose, in the midst of a grand country—myriad acres with the secret wealth of ages in their breast, stretching from the stormy Atlantic to the calmer waters of the Pacific—we must one day or other do that which will put a stamp on thousands of generations. Even now we are forced by our very position to be eclectic, and with the voice of that Providence which watched over the emigrants from Egypt, impelled the countrymen of Pericles to carry the Greek fire to many a smiling Mediterranean shore, raised up the Roman to civilize Europe, followed our great forefathers bearing in their little hulks the seeds of a grand liberty over every sea—with that voice upon us like a joyful inspiration, there is no danger, there is nothing but the strictest appropriateness in discussing and determining the forces that shall shape our destinies for all time to come.

If we were in any peril of growing oblivious of this duty, our brethren below the line would take care to save us from a menacing forgetfulness. In books and speeches they are always pressing on us their supreme claims—the air is heavy with "manifest destiny"—the latest of these propoganda efforts being the lecture of Dr. Tiffany

prepared for "another place," and which before a Toronto audience proved to be like the ring of the fat cook in the novel, which was quite unsuitable for the slender, genteel digit of the new bride. Now, as I have indicated, in replying to the Rev. Doctor, I, and I believe those at whose request I stand on this platform, are actuated only by the speculative interest and practical utility that must attend such a discussion, and by the honourable jealousy for a civilization to which we all owe so much. If, like David, I appear audaciously to advance, no better furnished than was the young bard and prophet and future king, it is only because I am confident that the cause will atone for the defects of the orator. And why, indeed, should I fear to grapple with this controversy? They boast a civilization which has no doubt given us many men of world-admiring greatness; we, a civilization, which has been prolific of heroes; they vaunt a flag which certainly has won some honours within a century; we, an old piece of ragged bunting, which in innumerable battles in Europe, in India, the world over, has for ages floated over invincible valour, which now for generations has been seen across the glad waves with terror by the pirate, with joy by the captive, which to all the benighted regions of the earth has been the harbinger of science and the handmaid of christianity, which, long before other countries followed the bright example, could flutter over no slave—"the flag that"—in the words of the old song—"braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze."

I make these observations in no disparagement of the "stars and stripes," but in vindication of our own ensign and in the spirit of the words of Mr. Lowell:—

"We own the ocean too, John,  
You musn't think it hard,  
If we can't think with you, John,  
'Tis just your own back yard."

We, too, have a civilization and institutions of some value, and the citizens of the United States must not be astonished if we do not credit them with being able to teach us everything. Nay, I cannot but think that where we have graduated they have but matriculated, and where we are laden with many a prize of tourney they have only won their spurs.

I need not say that in those early remarks of the Rev. lecturer about the beneficent influence of christianity on civilization, I cordially and entirely agree, with this one qualification: I do not think the Bible or christianity necessarily leads to great material prosperity, and can easily conceive the conscientious living up to a christian ideal might retard individual and national success of a certain kind, and of a kind greatly sought after. Germany and England are very prosperous, but I think it is illogical to account for this on the ground of an open Bible. Has not France been prosperous? And is she not giving now the greatest possible evidence of her vast hoarded prosperity? Did the Roman Empire have an open Bible? I think an open Bible the greatest blessing an individual or a nation can enjoy. But I will not measure its advantages by the amount of wealth in the

coffers or the battalions which can be sent to drench a field with blood. Its advantages are pure and peaceable, they grow up and flourish in the heart, they are independent of prosperity and are such as the world can neither give nor take away.

With regard to the long eulogy on the course of American history, the Constitution about the safety of which Webster, throughout a famous controversy, was so laudably anxious, the institutions of the Union and their working, I have no objection whatever to urge, except that Dr. Tiffany was not "on his native heath." Here on British soil, and in a chilly season, whole fourths of July seemed to boil in his veins. Against this, I repeat, I have not a word to utter, but that it was wanting in the genius of the *à propos*. It is a noble thing to be proud of one's country. I am proud of being an Irishman. But if in eulogising that unhappy but attractive land—which for ages has lain on the restless waves like a beautiful floating sorrow—I should indulge in observations honourable to myself but which might seem to others one-sided, historically inexact and philosophically untrue, I could not and should not object if it was thought fit, in whatever interest, to point out errors which might lurk behind particular views, or my general standpoint.

Dr. Tiffany very properly rebuked those who had no faith in the Republic. I yield to no man in my faith in that Republic. I agree with Mr. Bright that if anything happened to that great nation which should split it up

or plunge it into the night of despotism, there would be an universal shriek over the death of one of the fairest hopes of humanity. But there is no necessity that in order to preserve its existence, the Republic should become a prey to the dangerous and degrading lust of territory, hanker after annexation, and dream delusively of a time when the new civilization will extend over the entire of North America. And more than this. If it is not to disappoint the passionate anticipations of the best men in every nation who watch its career with a yearning anxiety, it must become something more than a myriad army of dollar-getters and breeders of dollar-getters.

The four great 'elements' laid down by Dr. Tiffany as characterising the new civilization: 1st. That the claims of a non-working aristocracy must cease; 2nd. There would be no privileged class; 3rd. That education must elevate the masses; 4th. Reverence for God, are very good, but, as was to be expected from the fact that the new civilization already exists, not very novel, with one exception. The first, read in the light of the second, if I understand it aright, either means nothing or it means pure socialism. In all societies not socialistic there will be, when wealth increases, an unworking class. You may prevent men having exceptional honours but you cannot prevent them doing what they like with their own, except on principles which in theory have a great charm for myself, but the application of which would seem to me to be attended with very great danger.

Now, when a man tells you that equality exists in a country, and calls on you not only to admire but to adopt its civilization as the ideal after which you are to strive, there are many questions to be asked before you can acquiesce in his demand. Is the government what is known as free—that is to say are the people self-governed? Does it attract to itself the best men, moral and intellectual, the nation has at its disposal? Does it favour or repress originality? Does it foster high aims? Are the laws wise and just, and are they efficiently administered? Does order prevail, and is life secure? Is the bench pure? Is the literature and the press manly and wholesome? What is the character, physical, moral and intellectual of the women? Such are some of the queries we must revolve in discussing the subject before us to-night. We are met to discuss two forms of modern civilization which have been placed in rivalry, but not by me, either of which we may choose, from both of which we may borrow.

If I had to speak of the United States alone, no language could be too elevated to paint the surprising energy, the dauntless enterprise, the commercial progress of the Great Republic. They have done great things for the world. They have shewn that in many respects democracies have great advantages over aristocratic communities. They have, in the words of their noblest poet, pitched new worlds as old world men pitch tents. They have built up a mighty nation out of the surplus raw material of Europe, especially of Great Britain and

Ireland. They have made their country an asylum for the starving and miserable of the earth.

"For her free latch string never was drawn in  
Against the poorest child of Adam's kin."

And when an Irish peasant, or the German *bauer*, or the English labourer, crushed by tyrannous customs or an overloaded market, looks for home and food and blessings, "his eye," to use the words of the greatest of living English orators "follows the setting sun, his heart expands beyond the broad Atlantic, and in spirit he clasps hands with the children of the west." Who can feel other than grateful and kindly to such a country? Take Americans individually, no men are more genial, no men are more generous. Some persons seem to have feared, others to have rejoiced, that I was brought here like some modern Balaam to hurl imprecations against the United States. If that were so the curse would congeal on my lips, or, as in the case of the old prophet, be changed into a blessing. I look on those thirty millions as destined to prosper and improve and increase until their country will present one of the grandest spectacles which could be contemplated by man. No! if I had been brought here with such a purpose I would say:—"How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied?" But this is neither your desire nor mine. I do not believe there is a man in this large hall to-night who wants to indulge in small acrimony or to

glorify a peevish patriotism, and I think I shall not only consult my own but your wishes by dealing out impartial justice as between British Civilization, and that new, and as some would have it, more excellent form, below the line. In doing this, I am sorry I shall not have time to dwell at as great length as I could have wished on the virtues of the American people. But even if I had, I would travel beyond my brief, and this enforced self-denial is the less to be regretted as they have taken such good care that nobody shall remain in ignorance of their transcendent merits.

Looking then to these two great peoples, what do we find? In America a simple; in England a complex civilization. In America we have one great formative principle, in England we have many such and with corresponding results. It may be laid down as a general truth that the more numerous the forces contending for mastery in a community, the more shall we find individuality, originality—rich, moral and intellectual life. It is to the fact that in England for generations we have had great tides contending for the mastery that we owe that balanced idea of ordered freedom, that deep self-suppressed force to which the world is indebted for all the liberty it enjoys at this hour. This it is which has made the English people so capable of self-government. For more than a thousand years the monarchic, the aristocratic, the ecclesiastical, and the democratic principle have struggled together, none ever obtaining complete mastery—the result being a civilization which, not-

withstanding all its faults, has proved more various, more rich in heroisms, more inspiring, more lovely, and above all, more free than any civilization that ever has existed in any other place or time.

In a state of society where there are many prizes to struggle for and various orders, there will of necessity be great variety of motive. This adds not merely to the picturesqueness of life—no small thing—but cultivating the imagination and refining the heart, develops beauty of character, and makes men passionate after high aims. In the United States—as in every purely democratic community—where there is nothing to differentiate one man from another, but wealth, nothing therefore to aim at but wealth, character becomes materialised, and love of physical wellbeing usurps a disproportionate and unhealthy place in the mind. The strong thirst for future fame, the proud delusion that the mighty dead watch our deeds, and that it behoves us to “think through whom our life blood tracks its present source,” Hotspur’s desire to live or die for honour, the feeling that wealth, success, renown, are all too dearly bought if we have to wade through dirt to dignity, these characteristics of an aristocratic race, together with many other great moral and spiritual considerations are, as we see, easily overshadowed by the love of material good beside which they seem unworthy of a ‘sharp’ people. Poets have sung of the difficulties experienced by poor worth in climbing the steep of honour in aristocratic countries. But the path of the men commiserated was

surely laden with roses compared with that of a man, who, in a community where wealth is everything, has, like Horatio, nothing but his good spirits to commend him.

But let us trace the effect of what is called equality more particularly. The American constitution has been sneered at by a very well known and a very brilliant American orator. I will not sneer at it. I will not call it a "glittering generality." I think it is a document which reflects undying honour on those great men who framed it, and that it has a great educating force in the States; that it is in fact a political apostle's creed which keeps people below the line republicanly orthodox. But it is an absurdity to suppose that it walls round the republic with any greater strength than belongs to our own unwritten constitution; and if ever the time comes when a large number of the teeming population that is to be in that great country begin to dissent from the constitution—and surely this time will infallibly arrive—then agitation will arise, and the end will be that modifications will have to be introduced. In a word, the constitution is strong because the people are, at the present, constitutionalists. But what do we find this constitution doing? It is held up as superior to ours in England. Ours grew—that of America was made. With their origin we have nothing to do at present; and I make the remark only to enable me to observe that from the nature of their respective inceptions, one might expect that government in England would work

more smoothly, with less need of mechanical contrivances to make it effectual and safe, than is found to be the case with the American system; that one is to the other, in a measure, what a man is to a machine. Equality, which makes every man feel that he may take any position while crushing down that vast ambition which has moulded so many old world heroes in colossal calm, develops a spasmodic emulation which bears the same relation to the other that itch does to passion. Yet is this eager self assertion and prurency of political desire a source of danger, and the result is that it is necessary to fence round the democracy until there is very much less self-government in the United States than in England. It has been said that in the Great Republic every man feels himself "the fractional part of a sovereign." That is felicitous enough. But has the democracy more power there than in England? Let us hear what an American witness has to say. Mr. Caleb Cushing, in a book on the "Treaty of Washington" which does little credit to his head or heart, to his learning or his breeding, says:—

"The submergence of the power of the Crown in Parliament, and of that Parliament in the House of Commons, and the commitment of all these powers to transitory nominees of the House of Commons are facts which, combined, have produced the result that *government* in England is at the mercy of every gust of popular passion, every storm of misdirected public opinion, every devious impulse of demagogic agitation

—nothing correspondent to which exists in the United States.”

In other words, in the old aristocratic country—in that old civilization wherein we find combined the virtues, and no doubt some of the vices of aristocracies and democracies—the people govern more truly than in the Great Republic.

Well, now let me ask a question very pertinent when we are speaking of governments. Is government in the United States purer than in England? Is the machinery by which you get your representatives there of a preferable character to that used in the little Islands from which we come? If we are to believe American publicists and writers, corruption runs riot through every channel of government activity, whirls around the village clerk and spatters the highest officers of the State. Only a few weeks ago a senator from a great State was proved to be guilty of corruption on a vast scale. He bought others and sold himself. There is only too much reason to fear this man represents a class. Need I say nothing like this can exist in England? Our Houses of Parliament have their faults—but there is not much lobbying done there yet.

The pathway to political distinction since the destruction of the rotten boroughs—a destruction in which I rejoice—is perhaps too difficult of access in England. Only the wealthy now can crowd towards our Parliament, and it is unfortunately too true that money and brains

do not always go together. The result is that Parliament is deteriorating. Where are the men who should be growing up to fill the places of Mr. Bright, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Disraeli, and Mr. Lowe? Up to the present, however, the Houses of Great Britain have well preserved their claim to stand first among the legislative bodies of the world. Some of the best men of the nation have been attracted to politics, and have adorned one chamber or the other by their genius and eloquence. What is the universal complaint among thoughtful Americans? Why, that the cultivated classes, the men of refined and trained minds hold themselves aloof from politics. Is it not a fact that there is actually a section of the American community which in consequence of the repulsive corruption of political life turn towards monarchy with something like a sigh? God knows! I am sorry to be able to say this. But there is no use in such a pusillanimous attitude. Monarchies cannot be made. No machine has as yet been found by which you can manufacture loyalty. It would be better for those men who lift up their gloved hands at political corruption and stand apart from the civil life of their country, to seek to repair the evil and bear their fair share of the burden of their times. But this is only in passing. Are we to exchange our comparatively uncorrupt and wholesome government machinery for such a system? Which are we to imitate? I fear this is a question which might lead to much searching of heart.

I do not think I need dwell on the great advantages from the point of view of stability, safety and easiness of working produced by a permanent monarch as compared with that of a changing president. I feel a cold shudder at the thought of connecting despotism with the United States. Yet, I cannot close my eyes to the possibility—nay to the probability—that in the course of time, when a large plutocratic aristocracy has been created and some conjuncture of events has brought into existence a standing army, with all the instincts of professional soldiers, there will arise one strong ambitious man who will impose his rule on the vast collection of States. It is easy to say Americans would never bear this. But the fact is, that, for a hundred generations, we shall not be able to weigh with full justice to older countries, American Civilization against British or French or German. The roominess of the country, the vast immigration, the entire absence of settled classes make it impossible to appraise at its true value this—if the phrase may pass—"New Civilization." If despotism, an impossibility in Great Britain, is out of the question for the present in the United States, it is not because of the nature of the government, or of the civilization, but because of the immense waste of unoccupied territory lying westward. Subduing this under the influence of sanguine hopes of wealth, and dealing out a merciless policy to the poor Indian, absorb all the restless and adventurous elements of Society. There is not to the hand of ambition the

horse that should gallop him to empire. The country is not sufficiently organized and compact. But the time will come, when all the conditions of old settled countries will be repeated on this continent, and then who can doubt that human nature will be the same? Nor indeed do I see any weighty reasons other than those physical and geographical ones I have mentioned why a despotism should not be possible at this hour. No child was ever more dazzled with a magic lantern than are the general run of the American people—I do not speak, of course, of great men like Adams and Motley and Emerson—with the court life of Europe. They endure a tyranny as tense and only little less degrading than the despotism of a Macbeth at this hour. No respect for the privacy of life is enforced, and the political wire puller of a district carries the battle to the very hearth, makes the world around him a whispering gallery of mendacious cowardice and treachery, and a realm of *espionage* wherein he sits throned on calumny and waited on by all the secret satellites of slander. No! I see no moral forces that we can set against the hypothetical American despot of the future.

Socially speaking, the advantages are again on our side. The elective system does not give much choice to our friends below the line, and fails to secure them men of heroic mould. We saw this during the last Presidential election. Mr. Grant was accused of laziness and of being too fond of relatives and cigars. And there seems to be no dispute that he is a wise man,

and like Mr. Spurgeon in his younger days, "burns tobacco wherever he finds it." Nor is it denied that he is quite apostolic in the care with which he looks after those who are of his own house. He is, in fact, a common place figure, rather fond of his *bien être*. Who was the alternative? Horace Greeley. Who was Grant's predecessor! Would any of these compare with our Queen as the head of society? Could any of these inspire love as she inspires it? Could either evoke such reverence as she evokes? Could they give an equally elevated tone to society? My experience in regard to the Queen is very much like that which I have been the subject of in respect of my own country and countrymen. When I am in Ireland I abuse my countrymen. But when the green hills having first grown indistinct as a dream are hidden behind the waste of waters, I cannot bear to have anything said against them. When I was in London I often criticised the Queen and our Monarchy adversely. But since I touched these shores I find a loyalty I had never suspected one of the deepest passions of my heart. And it is to this emphasis given to loyalty by separation from all we love, that we are to attribute the enthusiasm with which British Colonists receive the name of the Sovereign or any of her children's and not to a less noble cause. But sympathy is the true mood of just criticism, and I confess, it seems to me a great advantage to have an august lady or gentleman at the head of society.

The next thing that naturally rises is the law. Is its administration such as to create respect for it and make it efficient? The system of electing Judges is obviously and thoroughly vicious. Do you think it is a good way to secure learning? or purity? As a fact, do we not know that unfortunately corruption has effected a lodgment in the American Bench? The scandals connected with the name of Fisk shed a very lurid light on the administration of justice in New York. If we come to the criminal law we are no better off. We find at once too much tenderness for and too much recklessness regarding human life in the States. It is at present evidently very hard to get a murderer punished condignly, especially if he be a man of interesting appearance or of "generous impulses." An American journalist recently declared that it was almost impossible to have a murderer hanged in New York. We know that in some of the Western States an eminent judicial personage named Lynch tries and sentences men, while his labours are supplemented by the revolver. Judges who are almost openly venal cannot be removed from the bench they disgrace, and it is equally hard to hang well-favoured murderers. Now, I need not say that punishment in order to be effective must be certain. Against our Bench in Britain for centuries no word of suspicion has ever been uttered, and I am happy to say that in this respect, we in Canada follow the example of Westminster Hall. We hang a murderer as a rule in England when we can catch him, though

even with us there is too much of the mad doctor hocus pocus. What else has the Union to offer us besides a corrupt judiciary, uncertain penalties, and a tenderness for murderers of generous impulses?

Mr. John Stuart Mill very properly says that security to life is the best evidence of the progress of a nation in civilization. How will the States bear this test? When there is a little row in a New York saloon, is not the clicking of revolvers always heard? What is the meaning of this abominable practice of carrying revolvers in a great city? The fact is, that security of life is at a discount in the States. I will read you a letter, which is evidently a "skit," but which, therefore, only condenses the floating sentiment of the place and time. A correspondent writes with much humour to the *Missouri Democrat*,—

"MY DEAR BOY,—The double-barrel that you sent came safely to hand, and I was only shot at once while I was carrying it home. Bill Slivers popped at me from behind the fence as I was passing his house, but I had loaded the two-shooter as soon as I got it, and he didn't jump from behind that fence but once. I am glad that one of the barrels is a rifle, as I needed it for long range practice. The other I can fill with buckshot, and can riddle a man nicely at close-quarters. I mean to try both barrels on those Jetts when I meet them. You see, old man Jett stole a mule from us in the war, and when it was over, pap laid for him and killed him. Then Nigger Tom Jett, as we called him—the black-faced one—he laid for pap and plugged him. Then I picked a fuss with Tom and cut him into gibblets, and since that time his brother Sam has been laying for me. I know it is his turn, but I think my double-barrel will prove too much for him. If you want to see

fun, come down for a while, and bring a rifle. It don't make any difference which side you belong to, and it isn't even necessary to join the militia. It is easy to get up a grudge against somebody, and all you have to do is to lay for your man and knock him over. Behind my pig-pen is one of the sweetest hiding-places I know of, and it is so handy. A good many people come within range in the course of a week, and a man can pass his time right pleasantly. I wish you would send me a catalogue of Sunday-school books, with the prices, if there are any in St. Louis. If we can get them on time we will take a big lot of books. I am Superintendent of the Baptist Sunday-school now, and am running it under a full head of steam. Old man Byers, who was turned out, is right mad about it, and swears he will chaw me up; but he will chaw lead if he don't keep clear of me. My wife wants to know if you can't send her a set of teeth without her getting measured for them. Her twenty-five dollar set was busted all to flinders by a pistol shot that went through her mouth; but it didn't hurt her tongue. Write soon to your friend and pard.

\* \* \* \* \*

"P.S.—That sneaking, ornary cuss, Sam Jetts, crept up last night and fired at me through the window, but he didn't happen to kill anybody except a nigger girl. I mean to go for him, though, to-day, and will be glad of a chance to try the double-barrel."

Would such a letter have any meaning in England? Would it have any meaning in Canada, where, happily, British, and not rowdy traditions prevail? But it has a meaning in the States, and that meaning is, that life is not secure. In one respect, unmistakably—might we not say, in many?—the civilization of the four millions is better than that of the thirty below the line.

I am no lover of war. But at present, unfortunately, I see no prospect of wars ceasing. And it is therefore a question of some importance to ask what is the effect of the civilization of the United States on military prowess? Theoretically, and as a fact, democracy makes the people unwarlike, and the army, if there should be one, bellicose. The officers of the army of an aristocratic people will generally have little to gain by war, while war is the only means of aggrandizement open to the officers of the army of a democratic country. The intense love of material comfort of which I have already spoken, makes men averse from fatigue, and the feeling of equality breaks down discipline. The bubble reputation in the cannon's mouth will not prove as attractive to the democratic soldier as to his brother who is "raised" under conditions more favourable to the growth of sentiment and to the spell of rank. It is easy to see, therefore, that we must not expect a republic to be as efficient in war as a monarchy, and that if it should become so, there is great danger of a military despotism erecting itself on the ruin of freedom.

You may point to the first French Republic; but the example is doubly unfortunate. You can never credit any new form of government with the virtues or valour of the men that fight beneath its banners. They may receive inspiration from some great thought which has been burnished and set in a striking manner before their eyes. But their characters will always be the result of forces operating previously to the existing *régime*. Nor

can a servant or an institution be accurately judged while the gloss of newness is on them. It is, so to speak, when the honeymoon is past—when glowing hours and impossible hopes have alike faded into memories, and the ideal has shrivelled into the common place—in the dun gray of ordinary life, that we test a wife or a polity. That Republic passed with joy to an iron despotism, and it is more than probable that the chivalrous sap which burgeoned forth in so much daring and greatness was produced by other influences than are to be found in the unreal mockery of an impossible equality—that ever twinkling star that no vision can seize.

That great soldier, Von Moltke, has stated that it is only in an aristocratic class you can obtain really efficient officers—that is to say, officers with whom the instinct of honour is supreme. We have, in England, had to complain of our aristocratic officers—not for want of bravery—never for that; they always bore themselves well in fight—but for ignorance. But had we to complain only of the aristocrats? The sons of tailors and grocers who purchased commissions were as ignorant—nay, more ignorant than the aristocrats. It was not aristocracy, but the system, that was in fault—a system which permitted men to command before they had learned the rudiments of military organization and the principles of the science on the knowledge of which success in war depends. Application and painstaking do not come natural to an aristocrat any more than to a plebeian. Will anybody expect really able men, who

can choose other professions, to enter the army in a democratic community? They would much prefer setting up a shop. And I cannot conceive the ordinary citizen of the States, even though he had gilded epaulettes on his shoulders, not speculating in some way that would interfere with his duties as a soldier. Is there any real respect for the army in the States? They are not a warlike people. They are a "sharp" people; and it is not the man who, though "deadly hurt again flashed on afore the charge's thunder," who wins their highest approval, but he who by some half cute half lucky throw makes a fortune. The deepest pæan of the ladies of the United States is sounded for him who can amass the greatest number of dollars, and who gives them most to spend on the finery which no lady in an aristocratic community thinks the highest thing about her. Our women, perhaps, set too much store on the red coat. But you could find no surer sign of a warlike race.

In this rank, that shocks so many professedly loyal people, and which they deprecate under the name of caste, I see little to object to, and I will yield to no man in feelings of independence. But there is nothing slavish in acknowledging a recognised rank superior to your own. There can be no such thing as absolute equality. As Cowper says, men will be more rich, and more wise, and they will have manners which are notes of superiority as surely as anything else. Is not this to be acknowledged? Or are we to teach every boor

that he has a right to grunt out to men who are no more like him than "Hyperion to a Satyr," or Prospero is like Caliban, that he is their equal? When inferior men insist on regarding themselves as the equals of persons more divinely endowed, it is not these last are injured, but the poor victim of a silly delusion, who, having stifled emulation within himself, wallows in a base content. Intellectual superiority is, indeed, of a much nobler character than superiority in social rank. But if it is to be fully acknowledged, it must be in a society where democratic and aristocratic elements are blended, and where men are accustomed to look up to something which is not tangible and merely brutally prominent. The reverence for rank acts as an antidote to that wild worship of wealth which coarsens whatever it touches and makes life loathsome. Vulgar ostentation of wealth is inevitable in a wilderness of shoddy, and once this is the most striking thing in a community, intellectual refinement in the true sense of the word, grace of manner, self-suppression and nobleness of aim are not to be looked for.

The notion of society in a democracy is an uniform one, and the system of life provides no image of a high development of graceful and accomplished humanity. Is it not Emerson who tells us "how much talent runs in manners." Behaviour is as much an expression of knowledge as a well filled-up examination paper, and that difficult to define form of acquirement which consists in taste and almost unconscious apprecia-

tion we cannot analyze and scarcely appraise. But says some clever creature, no aristocracy would live only for constant replenishing from below. Granted. Neither can we keep up a first-class breed of racers without calling on physique from a more vulgar type. But for all that, is the race-horse the cart-horse? And we must put the same question in regard to all states of society. When we speak of an aristocratic people, we are not thinking of nobles, we are thinking of the entire nation. I cannot put my opinion more plainly or more justly than by saying that I believe in breed in men as I do in horses and dogs. In all cases we see qualities transmitted. Dr. Arnold said that when travelling on the Continent he was struck by the absence of gentlemen. In Italy he could see no gentlemen anywhere. The same want struck him in France. I cannot enter into the cause of this. But I will say that, in the sense that Dr. Arnold uses the word, his experience will be that of every traveller in a democratic country. Men that should be gentlemen are not. The Queen could make them nobles and dukes to-morrow, but gentlemen—never. Why should not those qualities which go to make a gentleman be capable of being transmitted? In fact they are, and most people believe so; and when they insist on the contrary it is always because they have a fancied interest in so doing, or are too cowardly to avow an unpopular opinion. I should not think the extinction of what we know as the British Gentleman a loss to be mourned over, if we saw anything equally or

approximately as excellent about to take his place. But I cannot turn from this honourable old figure to the puppets thrown out by "ile" and "shoddy," who do not know what on earth has become of them when they find themselves in a dress coat, without a sigh that freezes into a sneer. And where is the equality? The equality consists in twopence half-penny insisting that twopence shall be his very humble servant. Hardware looks down on Dry Goods, and Dry Goods, no doubt, sends the contempt on. And so you have an uncertain society in which every man is afraid of being kicked, and is desirous of kicking some one else. Human nature will be human nature to the end, and where you have not big distinctions you will have small.

As Dr. Tiffany says, with true homiletic profundity, all human institutions are imperfect; and no doubt aristocracies and monarchies have many drawbacks on which I could, if it were appropriate, dwell.

But let nobody imagine they have escaped from the evils of an aristocracy in the United States. The growth of manufactures in time begets a manufacturing class, immensely wealthy, with class instincts,—not working much Dr. Tiffany may be sure—and combining the characteristics of the noble and the tradesman, they make the most harsh aristocracy conceivable. This, I am told, is manifesting itself below the line. I have never, I am sorry to say, visited that immense country. But I am given to understand that experience proves the correctness of such deductions.

American restlessness has passed into a proverb. The sad American face has been commented on by their own as well as by foreign writers. Both these characteristics seem to be clearly traceable to the cause I have already placed foremost as the accounting force for most of the social phenomena of the States. Living in the present, life being considered a failure if a fortune be not amassed, and society being of necessity a mass of small fluctuations, calm is impossible. There is not in this world enough to satisfy the cravings of the heart, and it would indeed be strange if men who give themselves up body and soul to the one object of making money could wear a joyous look. Under such a social *régime* high thinking and plain living are out of the question, and great aims and lofty ideals, which change not with governments, and do not rise and fall with Stocks being as a rule not within the scope of life, a sense of rest is not to be looked for. That scorn of wealth when set against the claims of justice and honour that has been so fruitful in England is equally beyond the pale of a democracy.

It is only lately that the United States have developed a national literature. That literature promises to do great things, and to enrich the blood of the world in time. But it will scarcely compare with ours, even if we confine ourselves to contemporaries. We are, however, comparing civilizations, and we must never forget that it is to the rich and various, and noble and aristocratic life of England, that we owe our Shakespeares and our Miltons, with a thousand other imperishable

names. As for the American drama, the sooner it is wiped off the face of the earth the better. Our own contemporary drama is bad enough. But there is a scrofulous taint in the plays manufactured in the United States, which are as devoid of wit as they are full of vulgarity, and something more than a suspicion of coarseness.

When we come to family life and the ladies, I feel on delicate ground. But I have no hesitation in saying, that I think the principle of authority in the family is unduly relaxed in the States, that a great deal too much self-guidance is allowed the children, that I doubt the wisdom of permitting young ladies so much independence—further than this I will not go, for I am not prepared to say it may not work better than repression and restraint—and that I am quite certain injustice is done to women and to society by the way in which the gentler sex have hitherto been over-petted and band-boxed. What's the result?—A most delicate beauty doomed alas! early to fade, and a feeble physique quite inadequate to the great functions which, notwithstanding all a great teacher, to whom I owe a good deal, has written on the subject, I maintain to be chief among the ends of a woman's existence. Without strong women—this is quite clear—you cannot have a strong race, and the baneful results of that depressing indolent self-indulgence, which I understand is the rule, would even by this time have told but for the influx of fine healthy women, strong and

broad and muscular, which we have sent them from the three Kingdoms. An American young lady, it is said, and I quite believe it, will love her husband if he have plenty of dollars. Oh, this dollar! it meets you everywhere! Now, in the old country, there is no lack of maidens—fair and fresh to see—who, strong as they are beautiful, are ready to bear their equal share of the burdens of life, and will love a man even though he should be poor. I must say, I think in many respects we have the advantage in our family life, and in the bringing up of our women. If they are even a little more retiring than their American sisters, I cannot think it a defect. What bloom is to beauty, a retiring modesty is to character. Do not misunderstand me. I believe in virtue and loyalty where they bestow their hearts, the ladies below the line are not to be surpassed by any women in the world. But this is not all that the ideal woman should be. I once heard Henry Ward Beecher, using turf phraseology, very expressive, tell an audience composed of college students and a couple of ladies' boarding schools, amid much tittering: "If a man is to succeed in life, he requires plenty of grit, go, wind and bottom," and such men can only be had where the women are strong. The balance is not, however, entirely in our favour. The ladies of the Republic converse, I am told—Mr. Justin McCarthy is my witness—much better than English women, only they mar the effect by using book English, and the freedom with

which careers are opened to them, is worthy of all imitation by ourselves and other peoples.

There is one other peculiarity of the citizens of the Union to which, on this occasion, it is most appropriate that I should allude. "All free nations" says De Tocqueville "are vain glorious;" and the British lion in his time has roared loud enough. But, I must say, I almost prefer what may be considered the arrogant self-laudation of Englishmen, to the uneasy vanity of American patriotism. Let me read you a passage from that great writer who looked with no depreciating eye upon the splendid country which, even when he wrote, was expanding towards what I would fain hope is "a manifest destiny" that will one day dazzle mankind and give humanity a lift forward that will leave the world nobler.

"The Americans in their intercourse with strangers, appear impatient of the smallest censure and insatiable of praise. The most slender eulogium is acceptable to them, the most exalted seldom contents them; they unceasingly harass you to extort praise, and if you resist their entreaties, they fall to praising themselves. It would seem as if doubting their own merit, they wished to have it constantly exhibited before their eyes. Their vanity is not only greedy, but restless and jealous; it will grant nothing, whilst it demands everything, but is ready to beg and to quarrel at the same time."

"If I say to an American that the country he lives in is a fine one; 'ay,' he replies, 'there is not its equal

in the world.' If I applaud the freedom which its inhabitants enjoy, he answers 'Freedom is a fine thing, but there are few nations worthy to enjoy it.' If I remark the purity of morals, 'I can imagine,' says he, 'that a stranger, who has witnessed the corruption that prevails in other nations, should be astonished at the difference.' At length I leave him to the contemplation of himself; but he returns to the charge, and does not desist till he has got me to repeat all I had just been saying. It is impossible to conceive a more troublesome or more garrulous patriotism; it wearies even those who are disposed to respect it."

Now mind, it is not I who say this. Neither you nor I object to their crying up their country; it is a noble thing, as I have already said, to love one's country, even with a little wayward fondness. Yet I may remark, that in my opinion their minds kindle too entirely at its physical grandeur, and that they sneer too readily at the small proportions of the British Isles. Greece might have been stolen out of one of their States; and the real greatness of a nation as of a man, is moral and intellectual.

I have but a passing word to say of the Treaty of Washington, and of the Geneva award. I always, when in England, regretted the course taken by our government in those early days, when a dire storm had broken over the Union and an unrighteous rebellion menaced the very existence of the Republic. I wrote constantly in the newspapers in favour of an equitable adjustment

of these claims. But I never dreamed of England consenting to be judged by an *ex post facto* law; and now that the whole thing is settled, now that we know the final result, I think that the Americans, in the manner in which they approached the controversy, were not quite just to themselves, and if I had to choose for myself, I should prefer the simplicity of England to the undignified sharpness which confessedly got more than was due. A gentleman who is a citizen of the Union, and whom I have the honour to regard as a personal friend, laughs, but, nevertheless, I must continue to hold by my preference for simplicity over sharpness.

This worship of sharpness cannot but have a degrading influence on character. This it was, that, notwithstanding his crimes, created a "sneaking kindness"—to use an English phrase very expressive, and which may be translated into "affectionate regard"—for the great unblushing swindler, Fisk. It is essentially opposed to nobleness—to that frame of mind that thinks the first question to ask is—what is right? and grandly deems that "one self-approving hour whole world's outweighs" of vacant starers and empty renown and easily snatched wealth. We know what the supremely Just One said when the kingdoms of the earth, and all their pomp were spread out before him in magnificent array, and the sole price asked for rule and empire, a small obeisance to the spirit of falseness. He would have seemed then to lose a great opportunity and too conscientiously to forego the glittering prize. But on his scornful

refusal—on his grand—"let thee behind me"—a kingdom has arisen which shall know no decline, and all the citizens of which are "free indeed."

To what other test can I bring the rival civilizations? I must say, I think in our treatment of inferior races we have much that cannot but lie heavy on our consciences. Yet in the way we have dealt with the Indians on this continent, I think we have displayed more humanity than the authorities and officers of the Washington Government.

The newspaper press? As an English journalist I may be considered a prejudiced witness. But I think every impartial man will agree with me that, notwithstanding the enterprise and ability which characterize the newspapers of the United States, neither in breadth of knowledge, nor dignity of tone, can they be placed on a par with those of the three Kingdoms; and I could heartily wish that, here in Canada, we were more influenced by English traditions in regard to the management of our organs of news and opinion.

In the field of art and science there are great American names, but in these matters it would be a shame for England only to be equal to a comparatively new country. I fear, however, that the one great force which I referred to before is an enemy of thoroughness, though, to be sure, we are indebted to them for historians whose research will only not compare with that of Gibbon.

Well, I have done. Which will you have? Which is preferable—a society in which mammon is supreme;

wealth the only test of merit; without thoroughness or love for long enduring toil tending towards glorious objects seen in boyhood, kept in view in manhood, and grasped at last with joy when it may be the hair is blanched, but when also a character full of dignity and worth has been formed, and a life of good service to the commonwealth lived—a society restless, undignified, unshapely, unlovely; or that fair order in which degrees of rank provide various motives and enrich the standard of merit; in which the love of fame is sure to be active; in which greatness is out of the reach of none and difficult of access for all; which, broad based on the will of a great and a proud people, rises up by bright gradations until it culminates in the calm and by-faction-unsullied figure of the Sovereign. I might say much more, but enough has been said to enable you and me to determine on which side to make a choice. That choice I can see is already made. There are, I am persuaded, few listening to me whose hearts do not glow when they feel that they belong to an old historic people—a little land, indeed, but “the August Mother of free nations”—whose institutions grew up side by side with great men, and have been lived under by mighty bards and heroes—a civilization which links us with long lines of poets, and orators, and soldiers, and historians who have made names which shall never die. No! there is no danger of annexation. You cannot found or create a civilization such as that of Great Britain—it is the growth of ages. But you may despise

your birthright. You may, though you should not ally yourselves with your brethren below the line, cut yourselves adrift from the influences and the inspiring contact of a great nation. A philosopher is in our midst—Mr. Goldwin Smith, who has made it his business to advocate independence. He thinks it would be well for Canada, the Empire and the world, that we should cut the painter. I will not argue the point. But against his authority—which as that of a historian, a thinker and an acute politician, I consider high—let me place the weight of a great name, whose claim to be heard he would acknowledge as readily as myself—John Stuart Mill. That great philosopher, writing of the government of dependencies by a free State says:—

“But though Great Britain could do perfectly well without her Colonies, and though on every principle of morality and justice she ought to consent to their separation, should the time come when, after full trial of the best form of union, they deliberately desire to be dissevered; there are strong reasons for maintaining the present slight bond of connection, so long as not disagreeable to the feelings of either party. It is a step as far as it goes, towards universal peace, and general friendly co-operation among nations. It renders war impossible among a large number of otherwise independent communities; and moreover, hinders any of them from being absorbed in a foreign State, and becoming a source of additional aggressive strength to

some rival power, either more despotic or closer at hand, which might not always be so unambitious or so pacific as Great Britain. It at least keeps the markets of the different countries open to one another and prevents that mutual exclusion by hostile tariffs which none of the great communities of mankind, except England, have yet outgrown. And in the case of the British possessions it has the advantage, specially valuable at the present time, of adding to the moral influence and weight in the councils of the world, of the Power which, of all in existence, best understands liberty—and whatever may have been its errors in the past, has attained to more of conscience and moral principle in its dealings with foreigners, than any other great nation seems either to conceive as possible, or recognize as desirable."

The book which I have already quoted from, that of Mr. Cushing, tries to demonstrate that Canada must be absorbed in the Republic. But the Americans—and Dr. Tiffany is an instance—do not understand us. They evidently regard us as if we were but a chip on the outer circle of a whirlpool into whose vortex we must inevitably be sucked. They have made laws with the idea of coercing us. They have now learned their error, and know they had to deal with

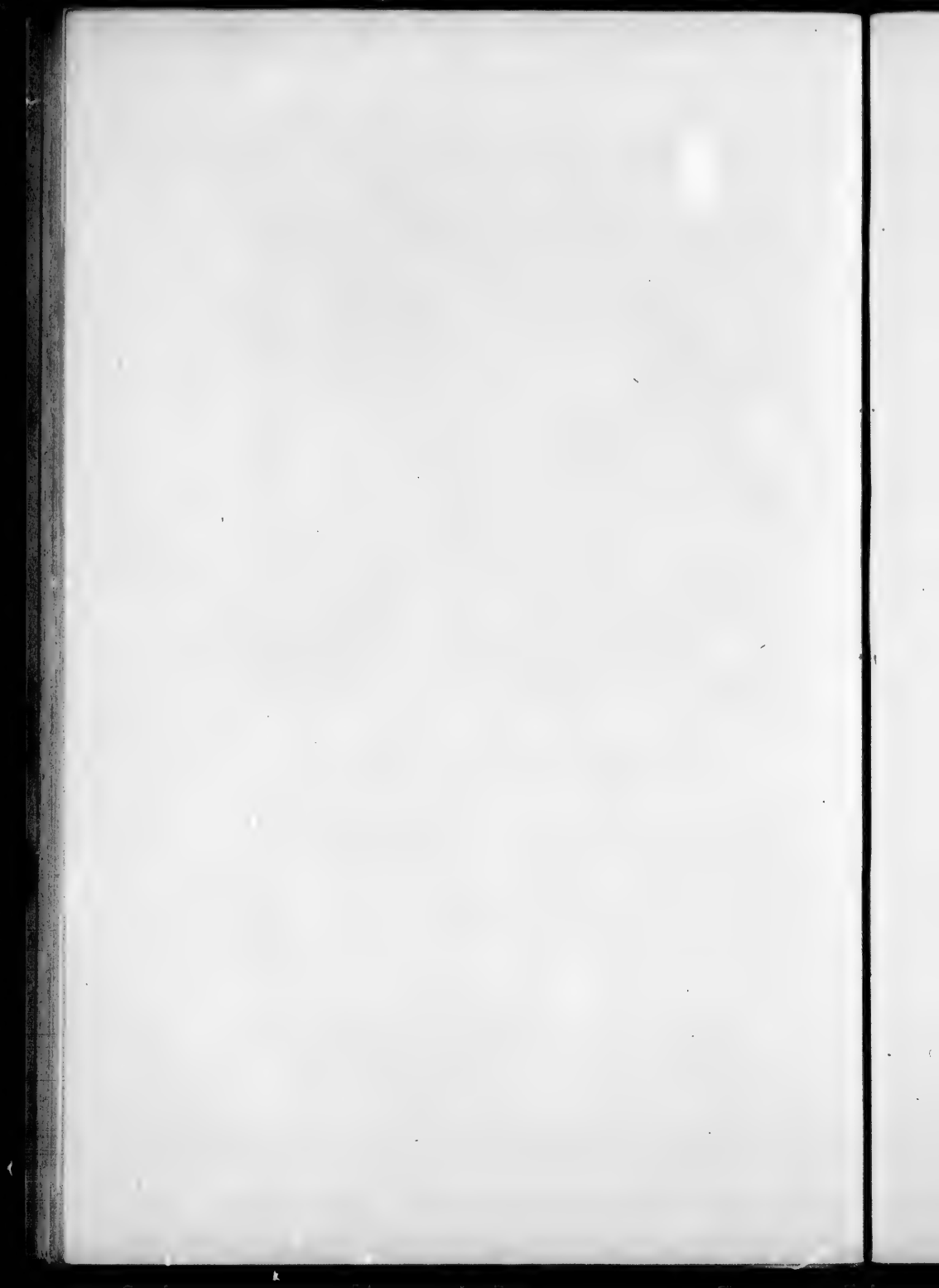
"A spirit too delicate  
To act their earthy and abhorred commands."

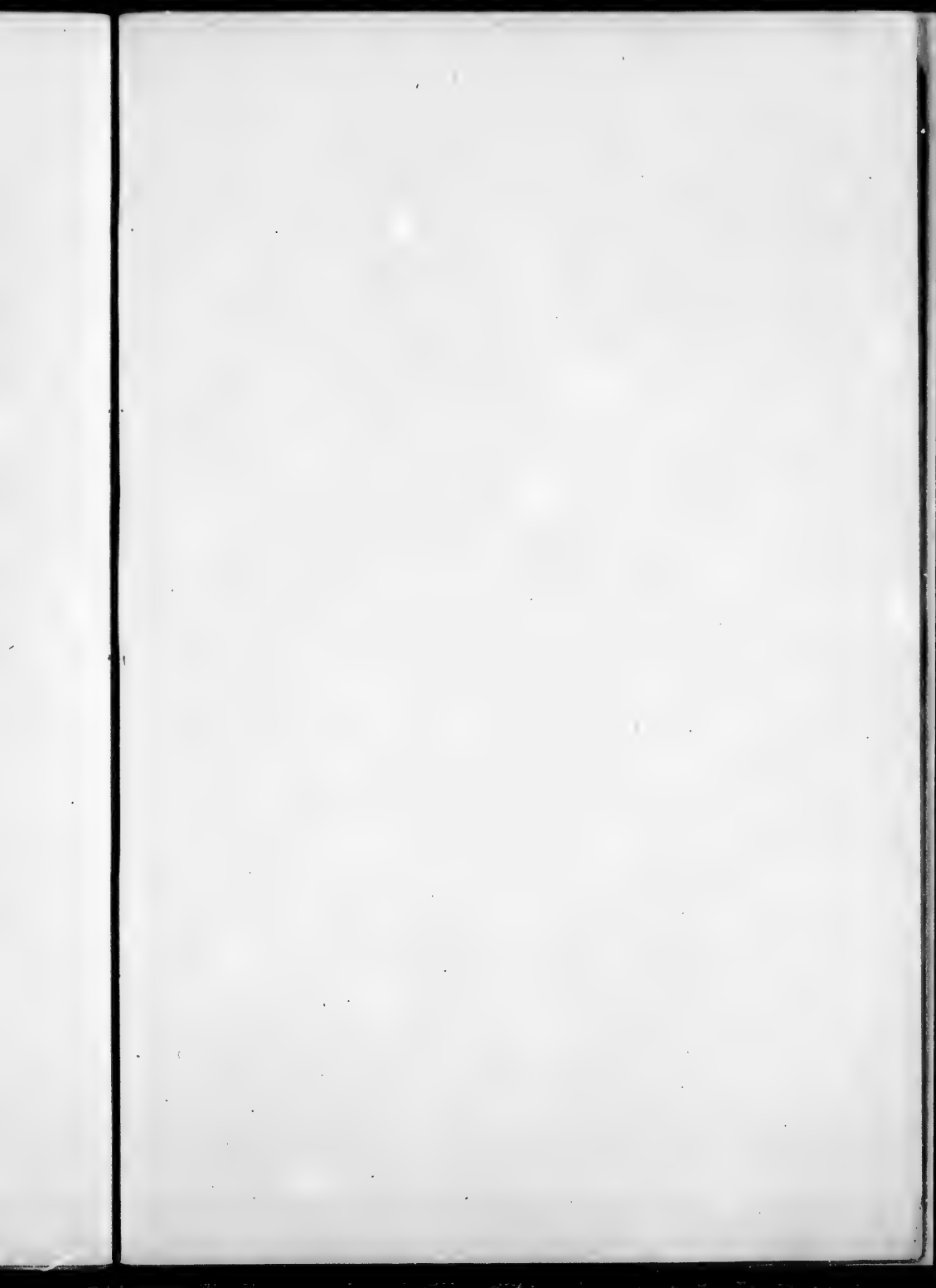
I doubt if it would be good for either country; I am certain it would not be good for Canada, whose spirit

and the laws of whose developement are evidently British. No! there is no danger of annexation. March may wed September and Time divorce Regret, and the frosts of January nip the flowers of June, but not a law of separation pass between us and the country of our great forefathers, in order that there should take place a marriage traitorous to our most valued and sacred traditions. Let the United States go on in their own course. We neither envy nor fear them. Let them flatter themselves with "manifest destiny." But if they would hear the truth I can give them the result of nine months' critical experience. I know the loyalty of the noble people of this country; and I can tell our Republican friends here to-night that that day shall never come when scattered nations of British race, looking with loyal love from every compass to the little mother isle—

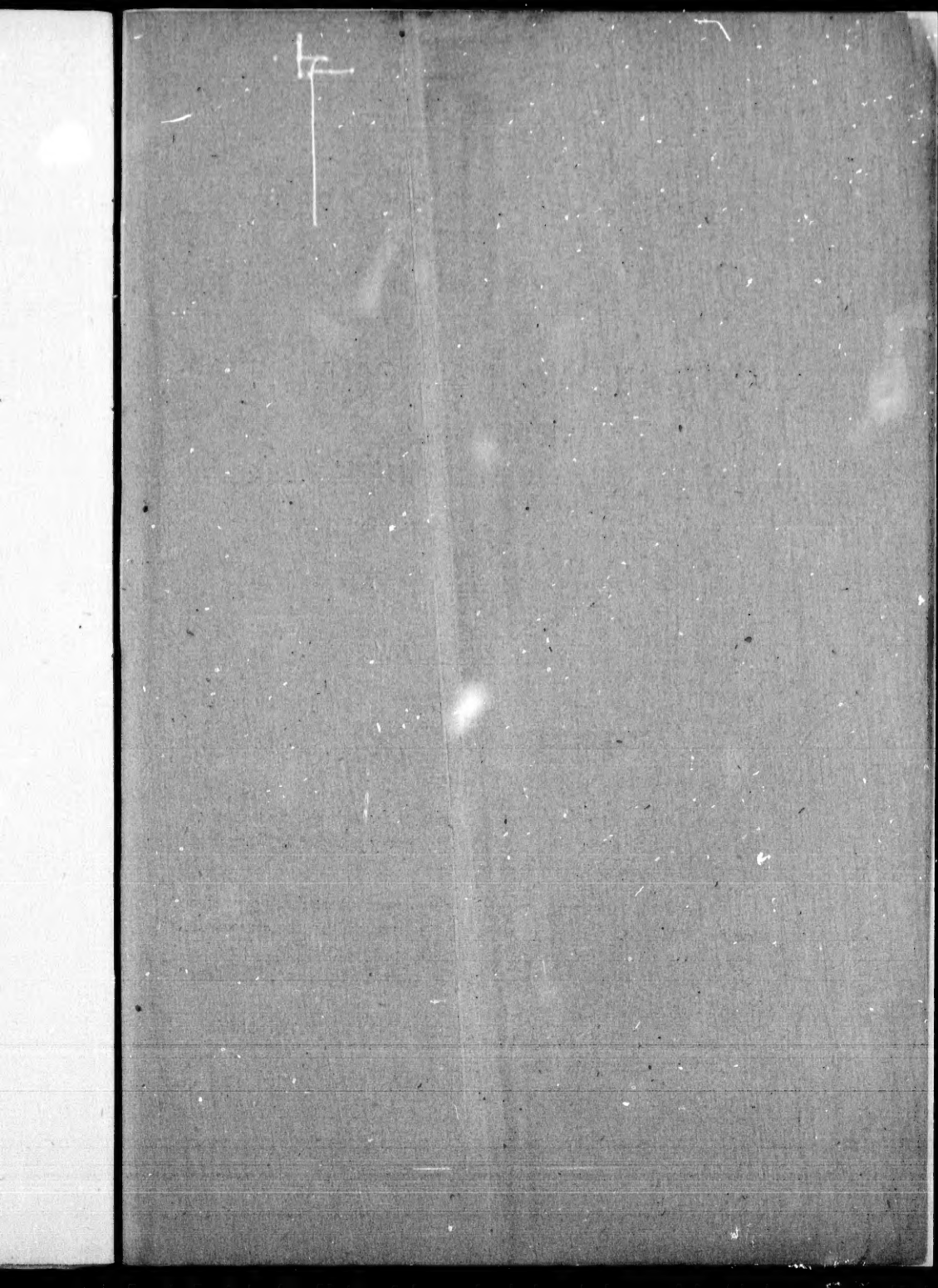
"Girt by the dim strait sea,  
And multitudinous wail of wandering wave"—

and reposing, safe and glorious, in that sapphire embrace—will turn round to call on Canada to add her voice to swell the peal of filial gratulation, of proud assurance of co-operation, and, should need be, of help, and will turn in vain.









NATIONAL PAPERS. NO. 1.

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CANADA FIRST;

OR,

OUR NEW NATIONALITY:

AN ADDRESS

By W. A. FOSTER, Esq., LL.B.,

BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE TO THE SERIES.

THERE is an intellectual vivification at last in Canada, and there are indications that the native mind is awakening from the lethargy which has hitherto shrouded and dwarfed it. This is expressed in many ways, and is most observable in the large reading constituency found in the country, in the influence which has given the impulse to the publishing and importing of the Book Trade, and in the recognized necessity for a Canadian magazine—a vehicle of native thought and culture.

The present Lecture, it is felt, will stimulate this to a further degree, and, it is hoped, incite a more hearty interest in Canadian affairs by the people of the country.

The Publishers trust to be able to issue, periodically, in the series they now initiate, a succession of papers on subjects that will prove of national importance; their object will be gained if it aid, even in a small degree, to promote a more ambitious and healthy native literature.

ADAM, STEVENSON & CO.

TORONTO, August, 1871.

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